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The lies the government and media tell are amplifications of the lies we tell ourselves. To stop being conned, stop conning yourself.

— James Wolcott

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May 18, 2004

Statement on the Trial of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia

by Daniel Ellsberg

In the special court-martial of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia in Georgia on Wednesday, the wrong man is on trial. If Monday's revelations by Seymour Hersh are confirmed, on the personal responsibility of Donald Rumsfeld and President George W. Bush for treatment of prisoners amounting to torture, they should both resign or be impeached and tried by the International Criminal Court in the Hague for war crimes. Sergeant Mejia served his country bravely and well in Iraq; but he is serving his country better, and just as bravely, in his publicly-announced refusal to participate further in what he correctly identifies as an illegal war using illegal means. That is also true of his role in being one of the first to expose serious American violations of the Geneva Conventions on treatment of prisoners, which as ratified treaties have the status, with the Constitution, of the highest law of the land.

Mejia's commendation by his company commander for "exceptional meritorious service" in Iraq cites his "courage and commitment" that "reflects great credit upon himself ... and the United States Army." Those words apply exactly to his present stance, which deserves commendation by his fellow citizens, and indeed, if they share his integrity, by his military superiors.

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Daniel Ellsberg is the author of *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. He was born in Detroit in 1931. After graduating from Harvard in 1952 with a B.A. *Summa cum Laude* in Economics, he studied for a year at King's College, Cambridge University, on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

Between 1954 and 1957, Ellsberg spent three years in the U.S. Marine Corps, serving as rifle platoon leader, operations officer, and rifle company commander.

From 1957-59 he was a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows, Harvard University. He earned his

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Ph.D. in Economics at Harvard in 1962 with his thesis, *Risk, Ambiguity and Decision*.

In 1959, he became a strategic analyst at the RAND Corporation, and consultant to the Department of Defense and the White House, specializing in problems of the command and control of nuclear weapons, nuclear war plans, and crisis decision-making.

He joined the Defense Department in 1964 as Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) John McNaughton, working on Vietnam. He transferred to the State Department in 1965 to serve two years at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, evaluating pacification on the front lines.

On return to the RAND Corporation in 1967, he worked on the Top Secret McNamara study of U.S. Decision-making in Vietnam, 1945-68, which later came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. In 1969, he photocopied the 7,000 page study and gave it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; in 1971 he gave it to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and 17 other newspapers. His trial, on twelve felony counts posing a possible sentence of 115 years, was dismissed in 1973 on grounds of governmental misconduct against him, which led to the convictions of several White House aides and figured in the impeachment proceedings against President Nixon.

Since the end of the Vietnam War he has been a lecturer, writer and activist on the dangers of the nuclear era and unlawful interventions.

Visit his Web site.

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